

11 June 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Richard Lehman
Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence

SUBJECT : Technical Review and the Functions of the
IAP

I thought you might be interested in some thoughts I have on how to, and how not to, use the IAP, based on experience with a comparable formal technical review process at Rand. The Rand experience is, of course, not fully applicable to our situation, but, upon reflection, it seems to adapt itself rather well to our needs.

1. When Should the Review Take Place? For our purposes, technical review should be regarded as the important penultimate step in the preparation of a National Estimate, SNIE, IM, etc., before it is submitted for formal coordination. It is, of course, quite different from the kinds of informal comments which drafters routinely obtain from their colleagues or from other offices within the Community at earlier stages in the production process. In other words, when a product is submitted for technical review, it is assumed to be essentially complete and ready for issuance, except for final coordination and Community acceptance.

2. Role of Panelists. In undertaking their review, panel members act as individuals. They are invited into the process because of their personal scholarship, experience and recognized expertise in their professions. I think it would be a serious mistake to constitute them in any sense as a "sub-panel." This would inevitably create an artificial

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expected to exist, and none is desired. It tends to make it less attractive for potential members to accept an assignment with the IAP. A panel member undertaking a particular review should look on himself much as if he were acting as a "reader" on behalf of a journal editor or book publisher. As the panel's name indicates, their role is purely advisory. They are asked to make a reasoned personal judgement about the technical soundness, analytic quality and, in some instances, policy relevance of the product for the benefit of those responsible for managing the national production process.

3. Content of Reviewer's Critique. Each reviewer should be asked to assess, on the basis of a careful reading of the draft, the technical quality of the work, including assumptions, matters of fact, logic of development and adequacy of the evidentiary base to support the conclusions. The reviewer should satisfy himself that the drafters have accomplished their purpose in a workmanlike manner, consistent with high professional standards. In addition the reviewer might be encouraged to include comments on completeness, relevance and other characteristics affecting the quality of the analysis, as well as to indicate where his own views might differ from those presented in the draft. The reviewer's critique should be submitted in writing addressed to the DCI but, for practical purposes, passed to the NIO responsible for the product. It should be framed not as a book review, but rather as a set of specific recommendations that might be carried into effect by the drafters. Minor comments may be included in the manuscript itself as marginalia.

4. Resolution of Conflicts among Reviewers or between Reviewers and Producers. Responsibility for acceptance or rejection of the recommendations of the individual panelists should rest in the first instance with the drafters, in consultation with their line managements. The responsible NIO would be the court of last resort. It would be highly desirable to include the requirement that the drafters prepare a memo to the NIO responsible, outlining the changes that have been made as a result of the critiques, and the rationale for rejecting particular critique recommendations. Though time consuming, this would be a useful intellectual discipline and would preserve a valuable record for future purposes. There should be no requirement to submit such a memo to the reviewer for his approval; his responsibility ceases with the submission of his written critique. Whether to pass such a memo to the reviewer as a courtesy in particular instances, however, should be left to the discretion of the responsible NIO.

5. Flexibility. In discussing this subject with some of my NIO colleagues, I have been struck with the variety

[redacted] particularly, impressed upon the need for flexibility in the utilization of the wide range of talent that will be represented within the IAP. The above suggestions, therefore, should be viewed simply as an outline of a typical pattern, with wide latitude being preserved for departing from this pattern. My injunction against constituting the individual panelists as sub-panels, for example, could well be waived in particular instances, where an NIO might consider it desirable to convoke a group of panelists, seminar-fashion, to discuss a key estimate in a more collegial and informal way, say, at an earlier stage in the process. Other innovative ways of using panelists individually or in groups should surely be encouraged. For this reason I feel that we would be better off not to overdetermine the system in advance. This is an added reason why it would be clearly inadvisable to require routinely the organization of panel members into sub-panel groups.

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